

Five Year History 2007-2012
Chapter BL, P.E.O. Sisterhood
Madison, Wisconsin
Written by Jean Frank

Sixty years ago, in 1952, Mother Teresa opened her first hospice in Calcutta, Britain announced the world's first passenger jet, Nelson Mandela was arrested in South Africa, Dwight Eisenhower was elected president in the U.S., and the Korean War was underway! And in Wisconsin, on May 3, 1952, Chapter BL, P.E.O. Sisterhood, was organized in the Lorraine Hotel, Madison. Its charter dates back to June 3, 1952, and on December 6, 1982, it became the 51st chapter in Wisconsin to be recognized as an Honor chapter.

Just as at the State and International levels, the past five years for 60-year-old Chapter BL--from 2007-2012--has been a period of change, growth, new ideas, and most of all, continuing development of loving new and old friendships. This has been accomplished under the able leadership of presidents Virginia Francis (2007-2009), Jean Nordlund (2009-2011), and Jane Villa (2011-present).

Membership (Chairs Sandra Balfour, Nancy Moore, LaVonne McCrill)

As Chapter BL celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2012, it is fortunate to have one of its charter members, Beth Ross, as an active and talented participant in all of its doings. Also noting her sixtieth membership year in P.E.O. is BL's Jean Frank. Within the last five years, Connie Todd has celebrated 75 P.E.O. years, Zo Kussow 60 years, and 50-year anniversaries have been acknowledged for Sandra Balfour, Cathy Barker, Lois Benton, Dorothy Leon, Sarah Rose, Jane Stark, and non-resident member Ann Olsen.

BL membership has grown from 65 residents in 2007 to 72 in 2012, including one student; we claim ten non-resident members as well. New members initiated during this half decade have included: Caroline Anderson and Linda Graebner (2007); Carolyn Kau and Sharon Vinson (2008); Sandra Burrus, Wendy Seay, Marlys Sloup, and Nancy Widder (2010); Debbie Cray, Annette Norsman, Susan Ullsvik, and Elena Villa (2011); and Bonnie Orvick (2012). We have been delighted to welcome two members by dimit-- Betty McMurry and Jane Villa. We were sorry to bid farewell to Wendy Seay who moved to Virginia last fall, as well as Patty Storm and Betty Land, both of whom moved to Minneapolis several years ago. We have lost three members to Chapter Eternal-- Charlotte King in 2009-10, and Ruth Hirsch and Ann Vincent in 2011. Five members have gone inactive--Dorothy Batt, Maureen Edwards, Evelyn Jennings, and non-residents Trudy Bangsberg and Cynthia Norvell. The membership figures, despite the losses, represent a net gain of six.

Attendance at our luncheon meetings has continued to be excellent--this year averaging 27 per meeting. Record attendance was recorded at 37 in October 2010, and many meetings attract over 30. Because of our growth, participation, and a limited number of homes that can accommodate such numbers, we have experimented with adding field trips, meeting in commercial sites, trying different meeting formats, asking members to RSVP to meeting invitations, and setting up co-hostesses to assist hostesses with hospitality.

In addition to these challenges, our Membership Committee continues to streamline pre- and post-counseling, and try different strategies to give present members a chance to bond. In 2007-08, we each had special sisters. Then, for several years, we divided into friendship groups of 7-8 which planned several informal coffees or social activities together each year. Other bonding opportunities for members were available through very active bridge and book groups. Most recently, SaraLee Hinckley organized a group that was interested in learning to play mah jongg. She also ably chairs a group of 20-plus members who share the responsibility of overseeing our service project, the Lussier Community Center's sharing library. (An article on this unique project has been sent to [The P.E.O. Record.](#))

Communications, Courtesy, and TLC

Former president Virginia Francis recalls that, in 2007 when her presidential term began, the ease of communicating with our members, state, and International by e-mail was possible since most of us were using computers regularly by then. When Jean Nordlund was president, she refined this communication, issuing regular newsy e-mails called the P.E.O. Spirit. Jean also put her technology expertise to work, preparing for each of us a purse-sized yellow booklet of photos with identification of all of our members. This helps us recognize our sisters if we are new or have missed meetings. In addition, as new members were added, Jean prepared new photos to add to our booklets.

TLC was provided in many ways as a visible sign of the love we feel for our sisters. The chapter's Courtesy Committee, chaired by Jane Stark, Judy Nicolet, and Mary Lou Hogan respectively, delivered flowers to members who were sick, had had surgery, or were in the hospital. Individual members organized food deliveries to members' homes upon their returns from hospital stays, or provided rides where needed. Shut-ins were remembered by the chapter at Christmastime with home-baked holiday treats or flowers, visits, and cards. Members (or families) were contacted to offer condolences and help at the time of a death in the family. Memorials were contributed to P.E.O. projects in the name of members who had died.

Social (Chairs Nancy Moore & Jeanine Olson, Joyce Bromley & Judy Kalan, Carolyn White)

Our Social Committees also have paid attention to making P.E.O. fun for members and their families. One very popular social activity for members and BILs/friends was our "Guess Who's Coming To Dinner?" parties, where we broke into separate dinner groups of 8-10 to dine on a catered menu at members' homes and then gathered at one home for dessert and coffee. We enjoyed that those events so much that we repeated them for three years in a row. Other special socials included a picnic BBQ, a summer salmon roast and solstice party, several summer evening gatherings at Opera in the Park, a summer luncheon cruise on Lake Geneva, an elegant wine tasting, two musicales with continental breakfast, and several desserts or other socials to facilitate yearbook distribution. We also planned a baby shower for a member Caroline Anderson who was a new mom, and several bridal showers for member Joan Borgwardt Halverson as well as several members' daughters.

Ways and Means (Chairs Kim Bentz, Ann Leon-Ellen Smithback, Susan Teteak)

Chapter BL has been able to consistently support P.E.O. projects generously the past five years, since our hardworking Ways and Means Committee has been so successful at fundraising. In 2011, chair Susan Teteak and her committee raised a record \$4,118 for projects.

Our popular Holiday bake sale/silent auction at our Christmas luncheon has always been a fundraising winner, consistently netting from \$1,000-2,000. Other very successful and enjoyable fundraisers have included a member talent/gift auction, an auction of professional flower arrangements, the sale of fall mums and amaryllis bulbs, special dessert/luncheon/box lunch events, mystery travel bag drawings, the Sock It Away fundraiser (where we each filled daisy-embroidered socks with our spare loose change), and the sale of brooms and dish cloths.

In addition to the funds raised for P.E.O. projects, these events brought in extra money for extra donations--special contributions to the P.E.O. Foundation and Star Scholarship, gifts for several of our IPS designated scholars and former scholars, and donations to the UW-Madison Odyssey educational program for low income students, the countywide Reach and Read program, and, of course, our Lussier sharing library project.

Programs (Chairs Carolyn White-Audrey Dybdahl, Ann Nelson-Linda Graebner, Jean Frank-Sarah Rose)

Program themes for these five years have been: 2007-08--Growth in Knowledge; 2008-2009--Everything's Coming Up Daisies: A BL Bouquet; 2009-2010--All Men Desire By Nature To Know (Aristotle); 2010-2011--Exploring Our World, Enjoying Our Friendships; and 2011-12, Seeking Growth Together in a World of Discovery.

The first year, State Organizer Nancy Buck visited our October meeting. We took a field trip to the Chazen Museum of Art. We also learned about the role of research in our lives, doctors combatting blindness, genealogy, West Africa, UW Children's Hospital, the Aldo Leopold (Nature) Center, and several local service organizations.

The following year we were thrilled to have a chance to view the European art collection of member Judy Kalan and her husband. We began a popular series of Getting To Know You programs in which several members related stories about their lives; three of these programs were done in 2008-09, and the series has continued each year since. For Founders Day, member Linda Hogle gave an inspiring talk about what the P.E.O. Scholars Award and P.E.O. had meant in her life. We previewed the UW's new Discovery Center, considered complementary medicine and locally produced food/recipes, and learned to live lightly on the land by conserving energy at the Leopold (Nature) Center.

The third year we were introduced to Jane Villa's new "green (built) house," Dane Co. Land and Water Resources, Tandem Press and the arts, Gilda's Club, the Lussier Community Education Center, and the SAIL program for retirees. A highlight was member Virginia Francis' stories about the first seven years of 15 that she and her husband lived and farmed in Spain.

In 2010-11, programs included a garden walk, football, artisan cheeses, fabulous food, flower arranging, "peaceful cow" veterinary research, and new additions at the

Henry Vilas Zoo. Jobs were also in the spotlight as we learned about the University Ice Cube neutrino project in Antarctica, Women and Jobs in West Africa, and Madison Symphony Orchestra's music librarian's professional life (Up To Her Ears in Music). By popular request, Virginia Francis' regaled us with tales of her final seven years living and farming in Spain. The program committee presented "The Butterscotch Affair"--stories about our founders for Founders' Day.

For 2011-2012, two field trips were on the agenda--one to Madison Children's Museum and the other to the Verona campus of Epic Computer (health care software company). Ann and David Nelson showed us their Redwing Pottery collection. We learned about Thai textiles, two retirees biking trek across America, women finding their place in the public world (Susan Denholm's Founders Day presentation), Rowland Reading Foundation's program to teach reading, Malawi Children's Village, and Madison Police Department's K-9 program. We shared stories about members' lives and cherished jewelry, and were treated to a Gershwin Fantasy by pianist member Ellen Smithback and friend.

Projects

We were pleased to be able to support P.E.O. projects, as follows: 2007-08--\$2100; 2008-09--\$2250; 2009-10--\$2150; 2010-11--\$2150; 2011-12--\$5025. In addition, in 2007, we contributed \$100 to Cottey College's Diamond Anniversary plus an additional \$984 in memorial funds to Cottey and IPS. The following year, we completed our pledge of \$1,000 to the Cottey Diamond Anniversary Fund with a gift of \$302.50. In 2009-10, BL donated \$255 in memorial funds to IPS, and in 2011-12, Cottey was the beneficiary of \$356 in memorial funds.

In 2007-08, for a second summer, our IPS Designated scholar Dorothy Rambo, entrusted us with her four children for Camp BL--a week of kids' activities that we organized for them in Madison to give Dorothy research time. (This was written up in The P.E.O. Record.) We sponsored several Star Scholarship and Help Fund applications, worked with a Russian student on an IPS application, and hosted a Cottey table at a local high school.

BL was on the receiving end too. In 2007, Joyce Bromley applied for and received a grant from the Wisconsin HELP Fund for \$2,000 for Access Community Medical Center (which treats the very poor of Dane County) to establish a Reach Out and Read program. A year later, BL's Jean Nordlund received a \$600 grant from the HELP Fund for the Women Rise Up program at the Lussier Community Education Center to help train women against domestic abuse. That same year, we nominated two for P.E.O. loans, and longtime BL member Connie Todd proudly got word that her granddaughter, Kimberly Whitsett, had received a \$9,000 ELF Fund Loan. In 2011, a BL member also received Wisconsin HELP funding for a woman in need.

One of our creative members, Barbara Barker, has taken on the preparation of wonderful "Suite Treat" baskets for our Cottey students, similar baskets for IPS students, and now, for our college student member (to help her through finals!).

Longtime IPS chair, Sandra Balfour, keeps us in remarkable and regular touch with our recent and present IPS designated students, including: Marianne Shershneva, Ukraine; Tamara Miskovic, Bosnia/Herzegovina; Dorothy Rambo, Kenya; Kolap Mao, Cambodia; Annamalar Jeyasehar, India; and Anya Kim, South Korea. She and Joyce

Bromley invited chapter members to a recent brunch with Anya who goes to UW-Madison.

Changes in Bylaws and Standing Rules, Chapter Practices

Bylaws changes have been minimal except to bring them into compliance with international and state changes, and/or to reword based on current English usage.

Chapter BL has streamlined its business in the following ways. We now use a special committee to initiate our new members, and that committee reads the ritual from small white books. Our guard now takes the password at the door as members arrive.

New monetary policy?... The chapter voted to give a monetary gift when a new chapter forms in our area, with the amount to be voted on by our members. We reinstated Program Committee honoraria as a budget option. We opened a savings account to save money each year to use when we are assigned to hostess events at state convention.

For The Good of the Chapter

.....The chapter planned and provided the pre-convention dinner for former state presidents in 2009. It designed, printed, and sold bridge tally pads at convention to cover expenses.

.....BL helped with the organizational meeting for Chapter EP, Verona, and sent several representatives to that meeting.

.....The chapter has provided a speaker each year for the Attic Angels Retirement Center lecture series.

.....Historian Mary Lou Hogan has updated the chapter scrapbooks and brought them to a meeting for all to enjoy.

.....Yearbook chair Nancy Hertel has organized a new format for our yearbook.

.....A number of us have been blessed with new children and grandchildren, and many have enjoyed wonderful travels and reunions. Our book group reviewed Betty McMurry's book, The Artist's Wife, one of several of her published books. Joyce Bromley opened an art gallery, completed a published history of the honors program at the University, and is doing research on East German population movement during World War II. We celebrated Linda Hogle's promotion to Professor of Medical History and Bioethics at UW-Madison with fanfare and a cake!

Conclusion

As Wisconsin's Chapter BL reaches its 60th birthday, we appreciate the focus and progress in our organization's past at the chapter's, state, and international level... We give thanks for the energy, kindness, and friendship of our sisters... And we look forward to meeting the challenges of the next 60 years!